

THE IMPORTANCE OF DEALING WITH A REPUTABLE DEALER

Ruth fell in love with the Vietnamese pot-bellied pigs in the livestock exhibit at the County Fair. The breeder told her: "These guys won't get any bigger than a Cocker Spaniel, you can train 'em to use a litter box easier than you can a cat, they don't get fleas, they're smart — you can teach 'em to do tricks — they're affectionate as all hell (here, scratch her behind the ear and hear her snort), and look at her, she's so damned cute."

So Ruth — against her husband Ellis' wishes — bought herself a tiny piglet, wrote out a check on the spot, handed it over and scooped the little porker into her arms and kissed its wriggling snout. Fifteen hundred dollars was steep, but the piglet was a female, and Ruth gave Ellis the same spiel the breeder had given her: "We'll make our money back plus a profit on the very first litter, the very first litter." The piglet wiggled half-way out of Ruth's grasp — snagged by her hind legs in the crook of Ruth's elbow — to lunge at Ellis and snatch the corn dog right out of his hand. Ellis licked a stray drop of mustard off his finger and said, "Think I'm gonna have ham for breakfast tomorrow." Ruth got a grip on her baby and said, "Like hell you will."

In just a few months it became apparent that something was terribly wrong with Sandra. Pot-bellied pigs were supposed to top out at forty to ninety pounds and toward the lower end of that scale for the females. But Sandra was pushing two hundred pounds and she was still growing.

Sensing that his wife had been screwed by an unscrupulous breeder, Ellis made plans to string the pig up and butcher her, but when he sneaked into the back yard with his rope and his machete, his toddler son Roy was riding Sandra bareback, and when the boy saw Ellis he grinned and screeched, "Lookit me, Daddy!"

Ruth was concerned about Sandra's size too, so she got on the phone to the San Diego County Pot-Bellied Pig Association's president. He told her: "Ya gotta be sure you're dealin' with a reputable breeder, honey, all piglets are little an' cute, so some of these bastards'll slip in a regular hog an' take your money an' run. So I'd say, from your description of your little girl's size, that you gotcha a pot-belly with a pituitary problem or that breeder screwed ya. Ya wanna find out for sure, check her tail. Regular hogs got curly tails; pot-bellies got straight ones."

Ruth hung up and went to check Sandra's tail, but when she stepped out onto the patio she saw her darling back in the corner of the yard, by the tool shed, being mounted by

Bill Heneghan's crazy, slobbering, inbred Irish Setter. Ruth stepped back into the house and grabbed the fireplace poker and went after the dog. After a sharp but glancing blow the dog dismounted and ran around in circles, hoping that his tormentor would tire and he could complete his act. Ruth chased him, swinging her poker hard, missing the tail-tucked red butt by inches. Sandra, her carnal desires awakened, trotted after them, squealing and snorting. And little Roy, stepping out of the house and wanting to join the fun, grabbed onto Sandra's curly bed-spring of a tail as she passed by and got pulled into the chase at a faster run than he'd ever before attempted.

COME DANCE WITH ME!

They are going to see Sinatra. Ruth and Ellis and their next door neighbors, Clete and Juanita, are humming along Interstate 15 in Ruth and Ellis' Oldsmobile, Las Vegas bound — Old Blue Eyes is singing at Bally's.

They stop at the McDonald's in Victorville at sunset for burgers and cokes. When they climb back into the car — men in front, women in back — Ellis slides a compact disk into his new stereo, Frank Sinatra's 'Come Dance With Me!' A photo of Frank graces the cover of the CD. He wears a blue suit, shirt, tie and fedora. He is grinning like a pervert, one eye winking, a fist angled toward his chin with its index finger extended and crooked slightly in the 'come here' gesture. The first song is a horn blaring rendition of 'Come Dance With Me!' The sound on Ellis' new speakers is sharp and pure. Juanita taps her foot in the back seat and says, "This stuff makes me feel like dancin'."

When Ellis pulls over at the rest stop to take a leak, Clete says over the back of his seat to Juanita, "Hey cutes, let's dance." Clete turns up the stereo's volume to the max and leaves his door hanging open; the smooth rolling 'Dancing in the Dark' is playing, Sinatra crooning for all he's worth. Clete and Juanita skip hand-in-hand up onto the lawn and begin their dance.

That leaves Ruth and Ellis alone in the car, Ellis gripping the steering wheel with both hands, Ruth, arms crossed tight and scowling, as silent as a stone in the back seat. Ellis says, "Man, look at all the damned stars, would ya? Nothin' like the desert for a starry night, huh, Ruth?" He's not sure she has heard him over the stereo, or if she has heard him, he's not sure if she's answered. He checks the rear-view mirror; the look on her face says she will kill him if he says the wrong thing, or fails to say the right one. Clete and Juanita — Clete in his droopy t-